



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

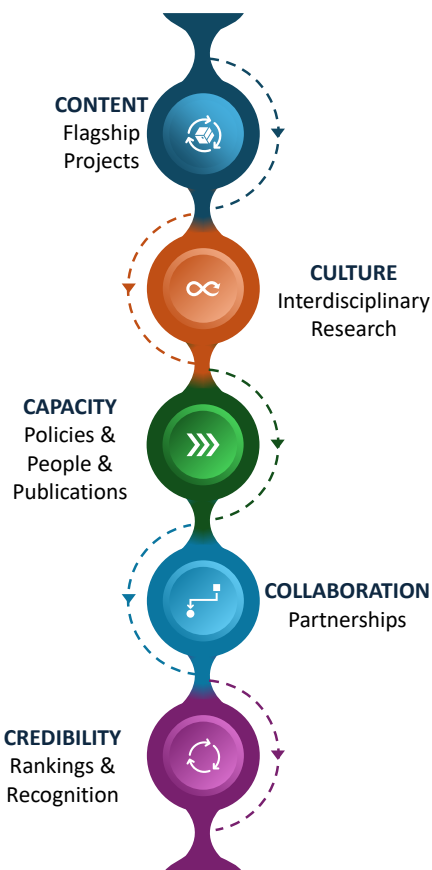
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Research, Innovation and Partnerships

THE RESEARCH JOURNEY



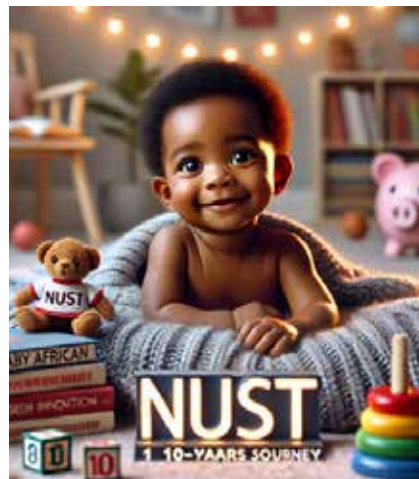
From Polytechnic Roots to PhD Heights: A Decade of Progress

The 5 C's Journey



A decade ago, the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) embarked on its research and innovation journey much like a young child taking its first tentative steps. In 2015, NUST transitioned from a polytechnic into a fully-fledged university, laying the groundwork for a new era of discovery. Back then, research at NUST was in its infancy not a single doctoral degree was awarded in 2015. Fast-forward to 2025,

and the University proudly conferred its largest-ever PhD cohort, a powerful symbol of growth and maturity. This celebratory report reflects on NUST's 10-year voyage of research and innovation (2015 - 2025), structured around the "5 Cs" framework: Content, Culture, Capacity, Collaboration, and Credibility the pillars that underpinned NUST's rise.



The newsletter follows a year-by-year timeline of milestones, from early steps to confident strides, highlighting flagship projects, policy developments, partnerships, achievements, and recognitions. In tone and spirit, it celebrates the University's journey as one would celebrate a child growing into a vibrant youth with pride, a touch of emotion, and forward-looking optimism.

The 5 Cs Journey

NUST's research and innovation evolution can be understood through five key dimensions Content, Culture, Capacity, Collaboration, and Credibility each representing an area of growth over the past decade. These "5 Cs" form the threads of NUST's story, weaving a tapestry of progress that has transformed the institution's scholarly landscape.

Content: Relevant Research and Innovation

From the start, NUST focused on creating research content that is both locally relevant and globally significant. Over the years, the University aligned its research agenda with Namibia's national development priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that the knowledge produced addresses real societal needs. Research themes expanded to reflect pressing challenges and emerging fields from climate change adaptation and renewable energy to digital transformation and indigenous knowledge preservation. By placing people and the planet at the core of its R&D content, NUST not only enriched its academic portfolio but also demonstrated innovation with purpose. The fruits of this approach are evident in high-impact projects (like smart city innovations and conservation technologies) and in international recognition, as NUST's focus on sustainable development helped pave the way for its debut in the global SDG Impact Rankings.

Culture: Fostering a Research Ethos

Cultivating a research culture within a young university was similar to instilling values in a growing child. NUST deliberately nurtured an ethos of inquiry, creativity and academic rigour across its community.

Annual events such as the Institutional Research Week (first introduced in 2017) and regular researcher writing retreats became fixtures of campus life, encouraging staff and students to share knowledge and improve their scholarly writing. Policies and initiatives were put in place to embed innovation into the University's DNA from research ethics and intellectual property frameworks to internal Researcher Awards that recognise and incentivise excellence. The impact of these efforts is now widely acknowledged. In 2022, NUST earned a regional award for "Organisational Growth in Research Management," a first-time accolade that "speaks to the promotion of a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, underpinned by a well-established research base". This deep-rooted culture of research has transformed NUST into a vibrant hive of discovery where curiosity, resilience (as shown during the COVID-19 crisis), and knowledge-sharing thrive.

Capacity: Building Human and Institutional Strength

Over ten years, NUST invested heavily in expanding its research capacity the people, skills, and infrastructure needed to generate new knowledge. This meant growing the ranks of qualified researchers (through advanced training and recruitment) and improving facilities and funding for research. The results have been remarkable. Research output has tripled





since 2015, with over 2,300 publications produced in just the last five years. The University's research funding soared past N\$1 billion in the same period, enabling the establishment of new laboratories, innovation hubs and centres of excellence. For example, NUST launched Namibia's first Science and Technology Park in Lüderitz and an Artificial Intelligence & Robotics laboratory cutting-edge facilities that were unthinkable a decade ago.

Human capacity was bolstered by a sharp rise in postgraduate enrolments and graduations: over 4,000 postgraduate degrees (Honours, Masters, and PhDs) were awarded in the past five years alone. The University also instituted a Professorship Policy to clarify and elevate academic career paths, resulting in a growing cadre of home-grown professors. Notably, the first female professors at NUST were inaugurated in 2018, marking an important step toward gender representation in academic leadership. Through continuous mentoring, training, and scholarship programs (such as new Research Excellence Scholarships launched in 2024), NUST ensured that its researchers like a child gaining strength grew more capable and confident each year.



Collaboration: Partnerships and Knowledge Networks

NUST's journey underscored that collaboration is the catalyst of innovation. Breaking out of silos, the University actively forged partnerships regionally and internationally to amplify its impact. Early in the decade, the first large-scale external research collaborations were established (2017), setting the stage for participation in multi-institutional projects. By 2019, NUST had strengthened ties within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and beyond partnering with bodies like the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and initiatives such as SASSCAL (a regional climate change and sustainability program). These alliances brought in expertise and resources, and they exposed NUST researchers to global best practices. The creation of four UNESCO Chairs since 2021 further exemplifies

NUST's collaborative ethos each UNESCO Chair links NUST scholars with international networks in priority areas ranging from sustainable water research to gender and digital technologies. On the industry front, partnerships under the Smart Campus Initiative with companies like MTC and Huawei introduced 4IR technologies and real-world problem-solving into campus, while cooperation with the Bank of Namibia helped launch innovation accelerators.

Importantly, in 2018 NUST merged various innovation support units to form the Directorate of Research, Innovation and Partnerships (DRIP) a dedicated office to secure external funding and foster strategic partnerships with industry, communities, and global networks, thereby enabling applied research and technology transfer at scale. Through these collaborations from co-designing conservation technology with Angolan partners in the SCIONA project, to jointly developing digital archives with international universities NUST learned the art of "playing well with others," growing its influence and learning from every partnership.

Credibility: Earning Trust and Recognition

At ten years old, NUST stands tall with a reputation that resonates far beyond Namibia's borders. This credibility has been earned through consistent performance and tangible impact. A milestone achievement came in 2025, when NUST made its first-ever appearance on the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings, becoming the only Namibian university ranked globally for its contributions to the SDGs. In that debut, NUST ranked around the top 400 worldwide on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and about the top 600 on SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) a remarkable showing for a young institution. This global recognition testifies to NUST's growing stature and the trust it has earned as a university that delivers on its promises of positive change. Over the years, NUST researchers and initiatives have received numerous awards



and accolades, reflecting peer acknowledgement of their excellence. Top NUST scientists have been listed among the world's most influential researchers, and the University's leadership in research management was validated by the SARIMA Excellence Award in 2022. Locally, stakeholders have come to trust NUST as a critical driver of innovation in Namibia whether its government relying on NUST expertise for policy input, or industry seeking NUST partnerships for R&D. In essence, NUST has grown from a newcomer into a credible thought leader, much as a child grows into a respected young adult in the community, demonstrating reliability and earning respect through actions.

Going Down Memory Lane

Year-by-year NUST's research and innovation milestones over the past decade brought new challenges and triumphs, collectively telling the story of an institution coming of age.

Laying the Foundations (2015 - 2016)

2015 marked the official birth of NUST (via the NUST Act of 2015) and with it, the dawn of a new research era. In these early years, the emphasis was on laying solid foundations for a research-intensive university. NUST focused on building up research infrastructure and establishing a reporting culture to track and promote scholarly activities.

A dedicated Project Services Unit (PSU) took charge of managing research projects and grants, ensuring that even fledgling research ideas received guidance and oversight. Simultaneously, baseline policies were formulated covering areas like research ethics and academic integrity to provide an enabling environment for future growth. By 2016, these efforts had started to gel.

The University saw a growth in postgraduate enrolment and an increasing buzz around inquiry and innovation. While outputs were still modest, the crucial groundwork similar to a child learning to stand steadily was successfully put in place, setting the stage for accelerated progress in subsequent years



Expansion and Collaboration (2017)

With foundations set, 2017 was a year of expansion and opening up to collaboration. NUST recorded a significant increase in research outputs as more faculty and students engaged in publishing and creative inquiry. To support this surge, the University introduced its first annual Research Week a multi-day event showcasing NUST research across disciplines coupled with intensive writing retreats to help staff polish their manuscripts for publication. These initiatives not only improved output but also fostered camaraderie and a shared sense of purpose among researchers, seeding a stronger research culture. Importantly,

2017 saw NUST secure its first large-scale international research collaborations. The University entered partnerships that brought foreign expertise and funding for joint projects, signalling to the world that NUST was ready to contribute to and learn from the global scientific community. To underpin this growth, new policy frameworks were rolled out for example, guidelines on research funding and collaborations and staff received training in grant writing and project management. By the end of 2017, NUST was much like a youngster finding its voice: more confident, more connected, and eager to explore broader horizons.



2018: INNOVATION IN MOTION

2018 was a breakout year where the theme was “innovation in motion.” NUST significantly expanded its postgraduate programmes, launching new Master’s and PhD offerings in key fields to grow the next generation of researchers.

This year was also notable for advancing gender diversity in academia: NUST celebrated the inauguration of its first female full professors, a proud milestone reflecting the institution’s commitment to inclusivity and academic excellence. Research at NUST truly hit its stride through flagship projects that captured national attention. One such project was a cutting-edge digital archives initiative in partnership with international collaborators, aimed at preserving Namibian heritage and research data in digital form.

Another flagship effort was the SCIONA project (“Co-designing Conservation Technologies for the Iona Skeleton Coast Transfrontier Conservation Area”), a cross-border research collaboration with Angolan partners funded by the European Commission.

Through SCIONA, NUST researchers and students worked hand-in-hand with local communities and global experts to deploy technologies for wildlife protection in a vast transfrontier park exemplifying innovation serving sustainability. Moreover, 2018 saw the first-ever Community Knowledge Fair, an outreach event where researchers engaged directly with communities to share findings and indigenous knowledge, reinforcing NUST’s role in societal development.

By the close of 2018, NUST’s research journey could be likened to a child learning to run the University was now moving swiftly, fuelled by innovation and starting to leave footprints well beyond campus.

Global Reach and Regional Depth (2019)

The University strengthened partnerships within SADC and the broader international arena, capitalising on connections forged in prior years.

In 2019, NUST extended its reach globally while deepening its regional impact. Notably, NUST became a key partner in regional initiatives under major international sponsors for instance, collaborating on projects supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and actively contributing to the Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (SASSCAL). These collaborations brought in substantial resources and prestigious networks, enhancing NUST’s research profile and enabling work on climate resilience, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy among others.

Internally, 2019 was a year of consolidating research excellence into thematic clusters. New interdisciplinary research clusters were established in emerging areas such as Digital Humanities, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and Climate Change adaptation, encouraging scholars from different

faculties to team up on common problems.

This strategy not only leveraged diverse expertise but also aligned research content with Namibia’s developmental needs in culture, heritage, and environment. Meanwhile, NUST’s emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurship gained momentum: student entrepreneurship programmes that had been incubating began scaling up in 2019.

Through the Namibia Business Innovation Institute (NBII) and the Fabrication Lab (FabLab) precursors to what would become the integrated innovation support system students were turning bright ideas into prototypes and start-ups. By late 2019, NUST had matured into a regional research hub, balancing global connections with local relevance. The University’s growing portfolio and confidence before 2020 hinted at its readiness to tackle even bigger challenges ahead.





Resilience and Response (2020 - 2021)

The years 2020 - 2021 tested NUST's resilience like never before. The COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe, and NUST like a determined adolescent facing a sudden storm rose to the occasion with agility and ingenuity. The University executed a rapid pivot during COVID-19, reorienting research and innovation efforts to support national pandemic response. NUST researchers from various disciplines swiftly mobilised to address urgent needs: engineers and scientists produced 3D-printed personal protective equipment and hand sanitiser; IT experts developed digital tools for remote working and learning; public health and social science researchers provided data and guidance to policymakers. Academic life also transformed

as remote teaching and online platforms replaced in-person classes, with NUST leveraging its ICT strength to ensure learning (and research) continued safely. Amid the crisis, there were numerous examples of solidarity and innovation from students volunteering in community health campaigns to the university's incubation hubs assisting entrepreneurs in producing medical supplies. These trying times ultimately strengthened NUST's research culture, proving its adaptability and commitment to societal well-being.

Crucially, this period also saw the formal establishment of the Directorate of Research, Innovation and Partnerships (DRIP) as a central

coordinating body. While innovation units had existed before, DRIP's formation (around 2020) unified NUST's research support and strategic partnership functions under one umbrella exactly when a coherent response was needed most. DRIP streamlined research management, funding acquisition, and external engagement, positioning NUST to better navigate the pandemic and beyond. By 2021, even as the pandemic lingered, NUST had not only weathered the storm but also learned to dance in the rain emerging more resilient, digitally adept, and innovation-driven than ever.

Scaling Up and Strategic Focus (2022)

2022 was a year of significant scaling up, guided by a strategic focus on excellence. With normalcy gradually returning post-pandemic, NUST pressed the accelerator on its research agenda. The University celebrated the inauguration of 8 new professors in 2022 a clear indication of growing academic capacity and the success of its professorial development policies. Research output hit a new high with 302 recorded research outputs (publications and other scholarly works) in this year alone, reflecting both the pent-up academic energy and improved support systems for research. NUST also launched or strengthened several high-profile initiatives to bolster quality and impact. The first UNESCO Chairs at NUST became fully operational by 2022, connecting the University to global research initiatives in areas like sustainable water technology and gender

in digital technologies. A structured doctoral training programme was introduced, formalising support for PhD candidates through workshops and mentorship ensuring higher completion rates and better integration of doctoral research with national needs. Internally, policies such as a Professorship Promotion Policy (formulated in late 2022) and a Researcher Development Framework were implemented to provide clear career pathways and skill-building for researchers, aligning with global best practices for researcher growth.

In terms of innovation infrastructure, the year saw NUST's High-Tech Transfer Plaza Select (HTTSP) an ecosystem hosting global tech giants and incubation services gain traction as an "innovation engine" linking academia with

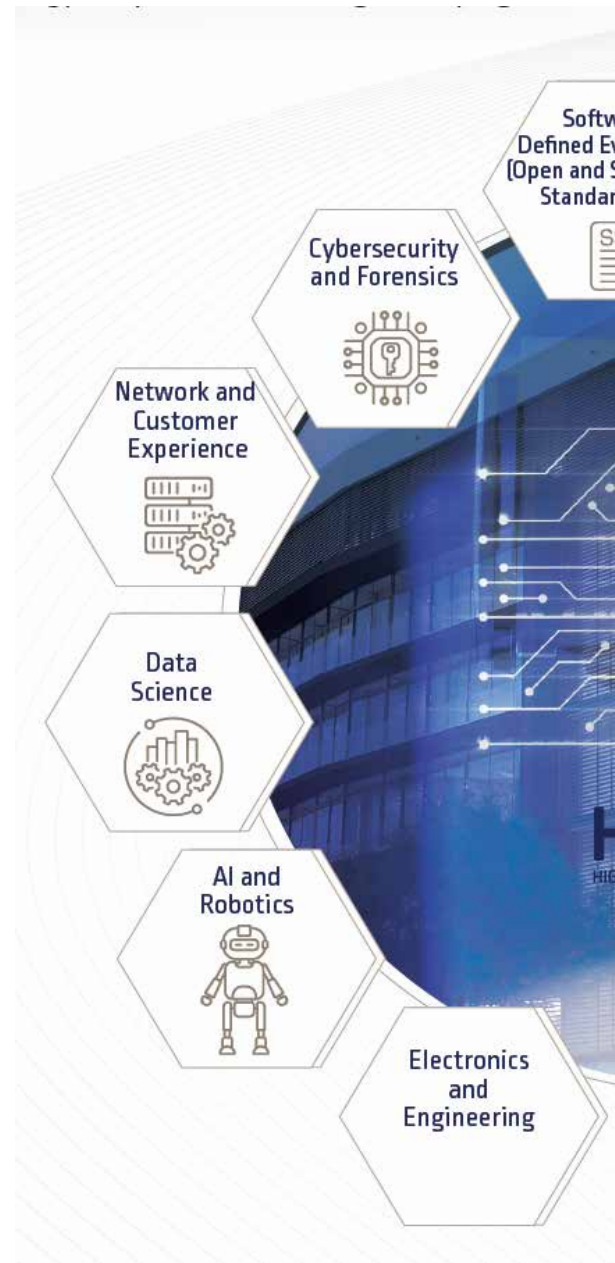
industry. By hosting the Huawei Academy, a Samsung lab, and a Bloomberg financial lab, among others, NUST created avenues for technology transfer and student up skilling on campus. Additionally, research excellence awards were introduced institutionally to recognise top-performing researchers, thereby incentivising a competitive spirit in pursuit of innovation (this contributed to NUST staff later achieving international recognitions). The cumulative effect in 2022 was a University hitting a new gear scaling its achievements, sharpening its strategic focus, and ready to claim leadership in research and innovation within Namibia and the region. As one might say, NUST by 2022 had grown into a vigorous teenager, brimming with potential and firmly set on a path of high achievement.

Recognition and Rankings (2023)

The University and our staff started appearing on prestigious lists and receiving nods of excellence, underlining NUST's arrival on the world stage.

By 2023, NUST's years of investment began reaping distinguished recognition. Several of NUST's top researchers were recognised globally in 2023. For instance, nearly fifty NUST scientists were highlighted among the top 2% of researchers worldwide in their respective fields (according to a Stanford University database), showcasing the individual brilliance nurtured at the institution. Furthermore, NUST's success in fostering a robust research management system drew continental praise. In 2023, NUST was honoured with the SARIMA Excellence Award for Research Management, a Southern African award celebrating outstanding R&I management, specifically for the University's rapid organisational growth in this domain. This accolade, awarded for the first time to any institution, spoke volumes about how far NUST's research governance had come in just a decade. It recognised the small but dedicated team at NUST who put in place effective monitoring, capacity-building, and innovation support practices essentially validating NUST's 5 Cs approach on an international platform.

Another landmark in 2023 was the establishment of a dedicated Postgraduate Centre at NUST. This centre (comprising a physical facility and enhanced support services) became a one-stop hub for postgraduate students offering resources from proposal writing clinics and statistical consulting to mentorship programs and a buzzing postgraduate lounge. The Centre's launch signified NUST's commitment to enriching the postgraduate experience and further boosting research culture among young scholars. It dovetailed with the later introduction of the Postgraduate Research Hub (launched in early 2025) as an online platform for sharing opportunities. With these developments, 2023 can be seen as the year NUST truly earned its stripes. The University's name began to appear in conversations alongside much older institutions a testament to credibility gained. Just as a 9-year-old child might surprise the neighbourhood with an early achievement, NUST at nine stunned observers by leaping into rankings and awards circles, setting the stage for its grand 10th year.



Infrastructure and Innovation (2024)



Major investments in research infrastructure and innovative initiatives, ensuring NUST's momentum would carry strongly into its tenth anniversary.

2024 was characterised by major investments in research infrastructure and a flurry of innovative initiatives, ensuring NUST's momentum would carry strongly into its tenth anniversary. Several new centres of excellence were launched during 2024. These included specialised research centres and labs focusing on national priority areas for example, a Centre for Smart Cities and Robotics, and a Water Security Research Centre each equipped to tackle complex problems with interdisciplinary teams.

The year also saw the introduction of the IRPC Research Excellence Scholarships, a programme to support high-achieving postgraduate research projects financially, courtesy of the Innovation and Research Promotion Council (IRPC) at NUST. This bolstered the capacity of students to undertake ambitious research that can yield transformative innovations.

Research and innovation at NUST in 2024 led to breakthroughs in areas like Smart City technology, water security solutions, and educational gaming. Notably, a NUST student-led startup called "Yyeni" gained regional traction by developing an AI-driven educational game platform that personalises learning an innovation that drew interest from beyond Namibia's borders. Such student ventures illustrate how the entrepreneurial ecosystem nurtured over the decade began to bear fruit in tangible ways, with young innovators from NUST solving real problems and attracting investment.

On the events and engagement side, NUST hosted a high-profile TVET Conference in 2024,

bringing together stakeholders in technical and vocational education to align skills training with technological advancement. The annual Research Week was re-branded as an Impact Week, reflecting a shift to showcasing not just research outputs but real-world impacts a cultural change indicating that by 2024, celebrating applied innovation had become second nature at NUST. A new "Insight Series" of public lectures was launched, featuring talks by leading researchers and industry experts, thereby enhancing the dialogue between academia and society.

Crucially, NUST established a fully-fledged Technology Transfer Office (TTO) in 2024, formalising support for patenting, licensing, and spin-off company creation. In parallel, the University, in collaboration with Namibia's IP authority (BIPA) and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), set up a Technology Innovation Support Centre (TISC) on campus.

The TISC provides researchers and entrepreneurs access to global patent databases and IP training, ensuring that innovations "Made in NUST" can be protected and commercialised effectively. With these pieces of infrastructure in place, NUST entered its tenth year with an impressive arsenal cutting-edge facilities, funding mechanisms, and innovation support structures all poised to sustain a high trajectory of research excellence. By the end of 2024, one could liken NUST to a 10-year-old prodigy getting ready for a big performance: well-rehearsed, well-supported, and brimming with confidence for the celebration to come.



Celebrating a Decade of Eminence (2025)

The year 2025 stands as a celebratory pinnacle of NUST's 10-year journey a moment to reflect on achievements and to launch boldly into the future.

Fittingly, 2025 brought global acclaim: NUST officially debuted on the Times Higher Education (THE) Rankings platform, appearing in the 2025 THE Impact Rankings for its contributions to sustainable development. This debut was a historic first placing NUST on the world map as a ranked university and affirming it as the only Namibian institution recognised for SDG impact. The rankings confirmed that NUST excels particularly in areas aligned with its research content focus, from eradicating poverty to quality education and conserving land resources. For the NUST community, this was a moment of immense pride and validation the equivalent of watching our ten-year-old champion win a prize on the global stage, proving that our early investments and hard work had truly paid off.

Amidst the fanfare of rankings, NUST continued to strengthen its academic framework. A comprehensive Professorship Policy was launched in 2025, formalising the criteria and support for academic staff to advance to full professor rank. This policy is expected to nurture more world-class scholars within NUST and ensures that academic promotions are tied to research excellence and innovation outputs thereby sustaining the momentum of the past decade. To mark the ten-year milestone, NUST organised an "Impact Celebration: Made in Namibia" showcase. This celebratory expo-style event highlighted home-grown innovations and research outputs from NUST that are actively contributing to Namibia's development from 3D-printed prosthetics and solar-powered water pumps to digital apps supporting local entrepreneurs. The message was clear: in ten years, NUST research has moved out of the labs and into communities, making a real difference in people's lives.

Looking ahead, 2025 also featured forward-

thinking dialogues under the theme "Research + Business = Innovation", emphasising the next chapter of marrying academic research with entrepreneurial ventures. This future visioning exercise part of NUST's strategic foresight engaged stakeholders on how to amplify the return on impact from research, ensuring that innovations translate into jobs, start-ups, and policies that drive prosperity. And indeed, as the year closed, NUST's leadership rolled out a new Integrated Strategic Business Plan 2026 - 2030,

charting the roadmap for the university's growth beyond its first decade. In festive ceremonies, complete with a birthday-themed academic parade through Windhoek, the NUST family students, staff, alumni, and partners came together to rejoice in "a decade of stretching minds, shaping lives, and serving Namibia". The University's 10th anniversary was not just a celebration of past eminence, but a rousing send-off into a future filled with promise.



THE ROAD AHEAD

As NUST stands at the threshold of its second decade, the road ahead is illuminated by the successes and lessons of the past ten years. The University has transitioned from its early steps into a confident stride, but like any growing youth, it now eyes even greater horizons. Guided by a new strategic plan from 2026 onward, NUST is poised to further advance its mission through research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, building on the strong foundation of the 5 Cs that has been laid.

This next chapter will focus on consolidating NUST's position as a research-led, entrepreneurial university that actively drives Namibia's development agenda while competing with the best globally. Key priorities include expanding postgraduate enrolment (the lifeblood of research) even further, leveraging strategic industry partnerships for mutual growth, and sustaining a supportive environment for student and staff success. In practice, this means more flagship projects tackling national challenges, deeper community engagement for inclusive innovation, and bold ventures into emerging scientific fields.

The metaphor of growth continues to inspire NUST's outlook. If the first ten years were about learning to walk and run, the next ten may well be about soaring. NUST will strive to soar by increasing its research content output in high-impact journals and patents, by embedding a resilient culture of curiosity and ethics in every classroom and lab, by building capacity through state-of-the-art facilities and training programs, by strengthening collaboration via global networks and public-private partnerships, and by enhancing its credibility through quality assurance and thought leadership.

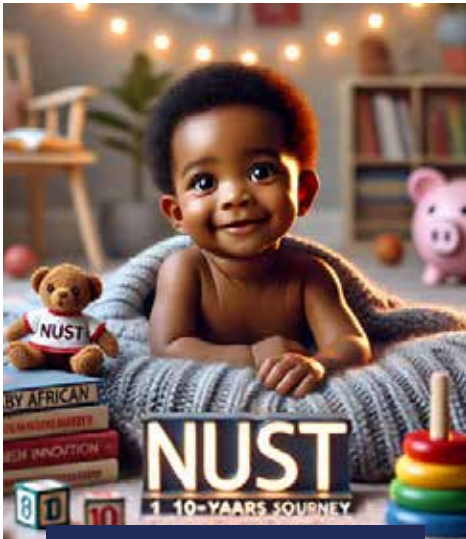
The journey will certainly bring new challenges the rapidly changing technological landscape, climate change, and socio-economic shifts but NUST faces them with the confidence gained from a decade of triumphs over adversity (be it establishing a university from scratch or navigating a pandemic). The University's youthful energy is now tempered with experience, and its ambitions are buoyed by proven capability.

Finally, this report serves not only as a reflection on an incredible ten-year narrative, but also as a celebratory salute to all who have been part of NUST's research and innovation journey. The achievements highlighted here were made possible by the collective efforts of visionary leaders, passionate faculty, diligent researchers, enterprising students, supportive administrators, and valued partners. Their dedication transformed a nascent institution into a beacon of knowledge and innovation in just a decade.

As we celebrate this 10th anniversary, we do so with gratitude for the past and great excitement for the future. In the words often shared during the anniversary events: Happy 10th Anniversary, NUST Research & Innovation! a toast to a decade of excellence and to the many decades of impact yet to come.



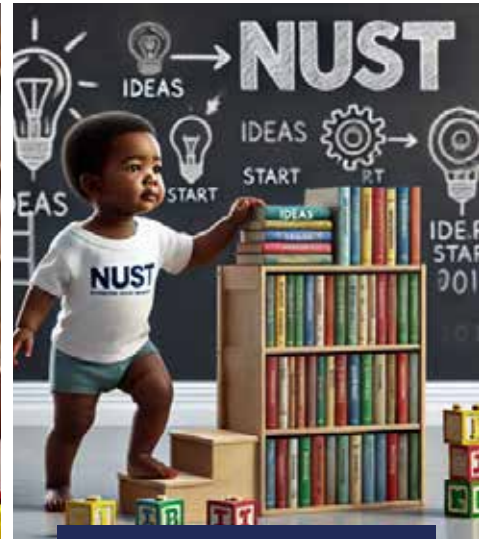
Made in Namibia for Africa and Beyond



Laying the Foundations (2015 -2016)



Expansion and Collaboration (2017)



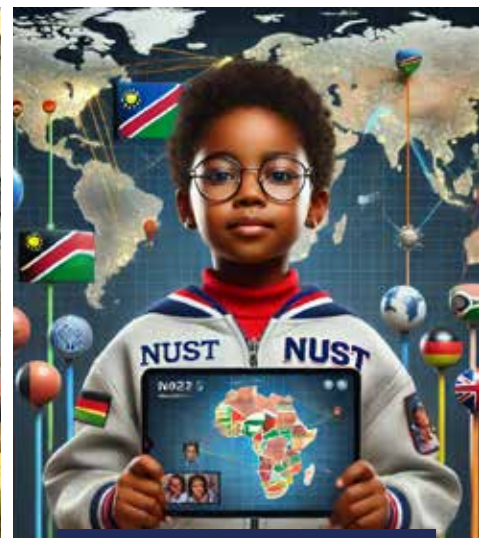
Innovation in Motion (2018)



Global Reach and Regional Depth (2019zz)



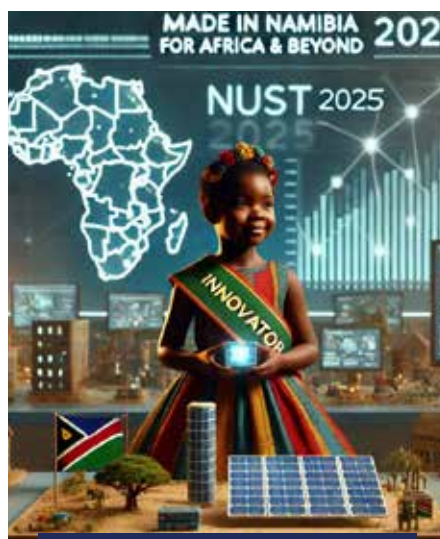
Resilience and Response (2020-2021)



Scaling Up and Strategic Focus (2022)



Recognition and Rankings (2023)



Infrastructure and Innovation (2024)



Celebrating a Decade of Eminence (2025)